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Between interest and activism: a person-centred approach to political participation among Greek adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Understanding patterns of adolescent political participation is essential for healthy democracies. Drawing upon data from Greek youth ($n = 589$, $M_{age} = 15.1$), this study (1) identified distinct profiles of adolescent political participation, (2) examined predictors of profile membership, and (3) explored transitions between profiles across a one-year period. Latent profile analyses uncovered three profiles that differentiated between their level of participation in both latent and manifest forms: 'informed enthusiasts' (90.3%), 'activists' (7.4%), and 'involved conventionalists' (2.2%). Political efficacy, national identity processes, political alienation, and perceived ethnic discrimination were predictive of profile membership. Our exploratory analysis revealed stable profile membership across one year. Our findings highlight the multifaceted nature of youth political participation and underscore the need to broaden its understanding in research and policy.

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KEYWORDS Political participation; adolescence; latent profile analysis; critical consciousness; Greece

The growing political alienation of youth (Dahl et al., 2018) poses a challenge to modern democracies (Kitanova, 2019) and sparks debates on the

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implications of political passivity (Amnå & Ekman, 2014). While some argue that political passivity may harm democracy, others see it as an indication of contentment and the changing nature of political participation (Amnå & Ekman, 2014; Jeroense & Spierings, 2022). Nevertheless, adolescents engage in issues meaningful to them (Sloam, 2016), such as climate justice, racial and gender equality (Bárta et al., 2021). Additionally, studies demonstrate that adolescents prefer alternative political participation forms, such as protests (Kitanova, 2020), and have suggested more latent forms of political participation, as put forward by Ekman and Amnå (2012) multidimensional typology of adolescent political participation. The shift away from institutional participation might therefore reflect an emerging pattern, the understanding of which is essential for current and future democracies (Enchikova et al., 2019, Jeroense & Spierings, 2022; Sloam, 2016).

Considering the multifaceted nature of adolescent political participation, this study provides a comprehensive examination of Ekman and Amnå (2012) typology in the context of Greece. It identifies distinct profiles of adolescent political participation and explores predictors of profile membership. We draw upon research on adolescent political behaviour, critical consciousness, and identity. Findings illuminate evolving patterns of political participation and inform strategies to support adolescent political behaviour.

Adolescent political participation

Research on adolescent political participation has focused on actions aimed at influencing governance, such as voting, and civic participation, such as volunteering (Pachi et al., 2014). However, the use of inconsistent terminology has led to conceptual discrepancies and fragmented literature. Ekman and Amnå (2012) offered a comprehensive, multidimensional typology of political participation that helps address these issues by distinguishing between manifest and latent forms of participation, each at individual and collective levels. Manifest participation is directed towards influencing politics, including formal political participation (i.e. actions within formal political institutions such as voting), and legal and illegal activism (i.e. extra-parliamentary activities such as demonstrations and squatting). Latent participation describes societal engagement that may lead to future manifest participation, including involvement (e.g. interest in politics), and civic engagement (i.e., actions influencing public concerns). Distinguishing between individual and collective political engagement reflects both the dual structure of democracy – individual rights and collective representation – and broader shifts towards more individualized, self-directed forms of participation (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Such multidimensional conceptualizations are more appropriate for youth, as many forms of institutional participation remain inaccessible to adolescents (Wray-Lake et al., 2014).

In their test of the typology, Amnå and Ekman (2014) identified four clusters of citizenship orientations among 10th-grade students in Sweden: (1) active (high involvement and participation), (2) standby (highest involvement, average participation), (3) unengaged (low involvement and participation), and (4) disillusioned (lowest involvement, low participation). These results mirror other studies on adolescent political participation relying on either cluster or profile analyses (e.g. Tzankova et al., 2021; Wray-Lake et al., 2014).

Given that Amnå and Ekman (2014) used cluster analysis, it is unclear whether their typology can effectively differentiate different groups with similar participation patterns (i.e., profile analysis).[1] Additionally, it remains uncertain whether similar findings emerge in other national contexts. Furthermore, how adolescents develop their preferred participation forms remains unclear.

Theoretical perspectives on stability and change of political participation suggest that adolescence is a formative period, as cognitive development, identity exploration, and increasing autonomy create opportunities for greater engagement (Wray-Lake & Ballard, 2023). Research supports the notion of adolescence as a formative period in political development (Russo & Stattin, 2017) both in the shorter (e.g. day to day; Mayer, Neubauer, et al., 2023) and longer term (e.g. a year, Mayer, Helmert, et al., 2023). However, most studies focused on specific forms of participation thereby overlooking a broader range of participation types.

Predictors of adolescent political participation

While most studies focus on specific predictors of manifest participation, such as political efficacy (Pavlopoulos et al., 2019) and political alienation (Dahl et al., 2018), few explore profiles of both latent and manifest participation and their predictors (Tzankova et al., 2021). To account for broader societal structures, we included predictors derived from a framework pertinent to political participation, critical consciousness (Watts et al., 2011). We further draw on findings from identity formation research, which is linked to adolescent's political development (Crocetti et al., 2012).

Critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/2018) encompasses three subcomponents: critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action (Heberle et al., 2020). Critical reflection can be considered a main motivational driving factor for political participation as observing and reflecting on society and one's impact on it can reinforce political efficacy (Seider & Graves, 2020). Political

[1] Cluster analysis is a variable-centred approach, which aims to identify clusters in item responses. Latent profile analysis is a person-centred approach, which classifies individuals into clusters based upon membership probabilities (Spurk et al., 2020).

efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to affect societal change. Critical action encompasses efforts aimed at dismantling social inequalities with the explicit goal of systemic change (Watts et al., 2011) and aligns with the manifest dimension of political participation. Numerous studies highlight the significance of political efficacy in political participation (Pavlopoulos et al., 2019) making it an important predictor for profile membership.

Conversely, a lack of political efficacy is associated with political alienation, a feeling of estrangement from political institutions (Pavlopoulos et al., 2019). While some politically alienated adolescents may show interest in politics, this interest is not always acted upon (Pavlopoulos et al., 2019). When they do act, they are more likely to refrain from formal participation, and engage in activism instead (Dahl et al., 2018; Pavlopoulos et al., 2019).

In addition to political efficacy, discrimination experiences are also posited to relate to adolescent political behaviour within the critical consciousness framework (Tyler et al., 2020). Although those experiences are inherently negative, they can foster an awareness of power imbalances, motivating adolescents to act against social injustices (Anyiwo et al., 2018). For example, Hope et al. (2018) found that Black and Latinx youth engage in extra-parliamentary actions to cope with ethnic-racial microaggressions.

During adolescence, individuals face the task of becoming citizens and developing identity commitments (Crocetti et al., 2012; Erikson, 1968). Both developments are intertwined, as shown by previous studies on national identity (Fowler & Kam, 2007). National identity commitment can drive adolescents to participate (i.e., higher levels of formal participation), while exploration should relate to adolescents participating in diverse forms of participation (van der Gaag et al., 2020). While the effect of commitment is well understood, outcomes of exploration activities (i.e., in-depth exploration, reconsideration of commitment; Crocetti et al., 2008) are scarce.

Present study

We aimed to (1) identify political participation profiles among Greek adolescents, (2) examine whether political efficacy, political alienation, national identification, and perceived ethnic discrimination predict profile membership, and (3) explore transitions between these profiles over a year. Our study contributes to current literature by (1) combining research on adolescent political participation, identity, and critical consciousness, (2) comprehensively and empirically testing Ekman and Amnå's (2012) typology of political participation, (3) exploring adolescent political participation across one year, and (4) focusing on the Greek context.

Based on adolescent participation profiles research (e.g., Tzankova et al., 2021), we expected to identify between two and eight distinct political participation profiles, differentiated primarily by their level of

participation (H1). Based on results from previous studies, we expected adolescents with high political efficacy (H2), political alienation (H3), perceived experiences of ethnic discrimination (H4), and national identity commitment (H5) to belong to profiles marked by higher levels of participation, with politically alienated adolescents either belonging to low formal participation or high activist participation profiles. We explored the effect of national identity exploration and reconsideration on profile membership. Lastly, we investigated profile transitions over a one-year period.

Adolescent political participation in the Greek context is particularly interesting. Significant events in the past decade, including an economic crisis and increases in migratory movements, have sparked political debates and massive protests (Kalogeraki & Kousis, 2022). Moreover, Greece was rated as a 'flawed democracy' by EIU Democracy Index in 2021, but advanced to a 'full democracy' in 2022, reflecting notable progress (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022). In light of such developments, Greece has witnessed a revitalized youth political interest (Pantelidou-Malouta, 2017). Studying this context may therefore offer valuable insights into changing political participation patterns.

Method

Research questions and hypotheses were pre-registered, see https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/M9STR. Supplementary materials, including study materials and syntax can be retrieved from the OSF project page (https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/S967U).

Participants and procedure

We used the subsample of Greek adolescents from the CATCH-EyoU dataset with two measurement points one year apart (Noack & Macek, 2017, wave 1: December 2016 – January 2017; wave 2: October – December 2017). We included 589 participants from wave 1 ($n = 228$) and waves 1 and 2 ($n = 361$), from 11 schools and 49 classrooms. Participants identified mostly as female (60.2%, 39.8% male) and were between 14–17 years old ($M_{age} = 15.1$, $SD_{age} = 0.4$). Most participants and their parents were born in Greece (65.4%), followed by participants with at least one parent born abroad (34.6%). Some youth migrated themselves (9.8%). Altogether, the majority had Greek or dual citizenship (94.6%). More details are available in the supplementary materials. The study received permission from the Hellenic Institute of Educational Policy .

Material

Indicator variables

Ten indicator variables were selected according to their fit to Ekman and Amnå's (2012) typology. Indicators can be grouped according to (1) individual political participation, or (2) collective political participation, each including 5 scales covering latent and manifest participation. Individual and collective involvement were assessed from 1=*not at all* to 5=*very much*. All other scales were measured from 1=*no* to 5=*very often*.

Indicators included: (1) involvement (individual, three items: e.g., *How interested are you in politics?*, $\omega_{t1}/\omega_{t2} = 0.75/0.74$; collective, three items: e.g., *I find that I share common beliefs with my compatriots*, $\omega_{t1}/\omega_{t2} = 0.58/0.61$), (2) civic engagement (individual, three items: e.g., *Donated money to a social cause*, $\omega_{t1}/\omega_{t2} = 0.54/0.56$; collective, two items: e.g., *Volunteered or worked for a social cause*, $r_{t1}/r_{t2} = 0.45/0.46$), (3) formal participation (individual, three items: e.g., *Created political content online*, $\omega_{t1}/\omega_{t2} = 0.52/0.68$; collective: *Worked for a political party or a political candidate*),[2] (4) legal activism (individual, three items: e.g., *Signed a petition*, $\omega_{t1}/\omega_{t2} = 0.54/0.55$; collective, two items: e.g., *Taken part in a demonstration or strike*, $r_{t1}/r_{t2} = 0.28/0.38$), and (5) illegal activism (individual: *Painted or stuck political messages or graffiti on the walls*[2]; collective, two items: e.g., *Taken part in an occupation of a building or a public space*, $r_{t1}/r_{t2} = 0.45/0.43$). An overview of all items is available in the supplementary materials.

Validation measure

Political efficacy was assessed with seven items adapted from Krampen (1991); e.g., *I feel that I have a fairly good understanding of important social issues;* $\omega_{t1}/\omega_{t2} = 0.79/0.81$, $M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.6$, from 1=*totally disagree* to 5=*totally agree*).

Predictors

Responses were on a 5-point likert scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) unless otherwise specified. Ratings were averaged across items to form a single score.

National Identity

National identity was assessed with the shortened U-MICS scale (Noack & Macek, 2017, based on; Crocetti et al., 2008; e.g., *I feel proud to be Greek*, commitment: $\omega = 0.83$, $M = 4.1$, $SD = 1.0$; exploration: $\omega = 0.75$, $M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.0$; reconsideration: $\omega = 0.72$, $M = 2.6$, $SD = 1.1$).

[2]Collective formal political participation and individual illegal activism were measured with single items. All others were measured with multiple items, which were averaged for analysis.

Political Alienation

Political alienation was assessed with four items from Noack and Macek (2017); e.g., *People like me do not have the opportunity to influence the decisions of the European Union*; ω = 0.79, *M* = 3.4, *SD* = 1.0).

Perceived Ethnic Discrimination

Perceived ethnic discrimination was assessed using eight items on person and group-based ethnic discrimination in contexts like schools and neighbourhoods (Noack & Macek, 2017; e.g., *Do you feel that you are being wronged or treated badly because of your ethnic origin?)*. Responses were on a 5-point Likert scale (*1 = never, 5 = very often*; *ω* = 0.85, *M* = 1.8, *SD* = 0.7). Person and group-based discrimination were moderately correlated (0.42, $p < .001$).

Demographic Variables

We included age, gender (1=*female*, 2=*male*), school type (1=*high school*, 2=*vocational school*), mother's and father's education (1 = no university degree, 2 = university degree),[3] how well family income covers costs (*1 = not at all* to *4 = all costs*), immigrant background (*1 = parent and oneself born in Greece, 2 = at least one parent or oneself born abroad*), and Greek citizenship (*1 = yes, 2 = dual, 3 = no*).

Data analysis

We conducted a Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) to identify political participation profiles among adolescents based on their responses to indicator variables, using M*plus* 8.8 with a three-step mixture model approach accounting for the multilevel structure (students nested in classrooms; Vermunt & Magidson, 2010). Political efficacy was included as an auxiliary variable to validate our profile solution. This means that solutions must include profiles that differ meaningfully in their political efficacy to be considered (see Weller et al., 2020).

We selected the number of profiles based on model fit, parsimony, and theoretical considerations (Collins & Lanza, 2009). Model fit was assessed using the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC; Schwarz, 1978) and the sample size adjusted BIC (aBIC), with lower values indicating better fit (Weller et al., 2020). We also considered entropy (> .7) and the bootstrapped log-likelihood ratio test (Nylund et al., 2007). Deviating from our pre-registration, we included theoretically meaningful profiles with less than 5% of students due to low political participation levels in our sample.

[3]We initially used dummy-coded mother's and father's education (1=*primary school* to 7=*PhD*). However, group sizes varied (13 to 205) and regression analysis showed estimation issues. Therefore, we dichotomized this variable.

To examine associations between profile membership and predictors, we conducted a multivariate logistic regression. If predictors showed estimation issues (e.g. no standard error), we excluded the predictor. For a sensitivity analysis, we conducted univariate logistic regression and checked the predictors' bivariate correlations (see supplemental material S7 to S8).

For our exploratory hypothesis, we conducted Latent Transition Analysis (LTA). First, we conducted LPA for wave 2 of the CATCH-EyoU data ($n = 360$ from wave 1) and assessed configural, metric, and scalar invariance. Models were compared according to changes in fit indices (e.g. Cheung & Rensvold, 2002), with a significant $\Delta\chi_{SB}^2$ (Satorra & Bentler, 2001) and $\Delta CFI \geq -.010$ supplemented by $\Delta RMSEA \geq .015$ (Chen, 2007) indicating non-invariance.

To account for sample attrition, we used full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation with robust standard errors (MLR). In other words, we used all available data from participants for analysis.

Attrition analysis

To examine whether students who participated at both waves differed from students who only participated at T1, we conducted logistic regression analysis (T1 to T2 attrition: 589 to 361 participants = 38.7%). We included demographic information on parents and adolescents, and profile indicators with their predictors. Participants from vocational schools (OR = 9.85, $p = .002$), higher individual civic engagement (OR = 5.24, $p = .022$), and higher levels of national identity reconsideration (OR = 4.16, $p = .041$) were less likely to participate in T2.

Results

We selected the three-profile solution as the best fitting solution, based on statistical criteria (ΔBIC:789.14; ΔBIC:824.07), convergence, and theoretical considerations (see Table S3 in the supplemental materials).

Profile content

We labelled the largest profile *informed enthusiast* (90.3%, $n = 532$), characterized by high individual and collective involvement, but low engagement in other forms of political participation. The *activist* profile (7.4%, $n = 44$) exhibited high involvement, civic engagement, and the highest levels of legal and illegal activism. The smallest profile, *involved conventionalist* (2.2%, $n = 13$), showed high involvement and the highest levels of conventional participation (see Figure 1). Profile membership was significantly associated with political efficacy. *Activists* ($M = 4.21$, $SE = 0.09$) were more politically

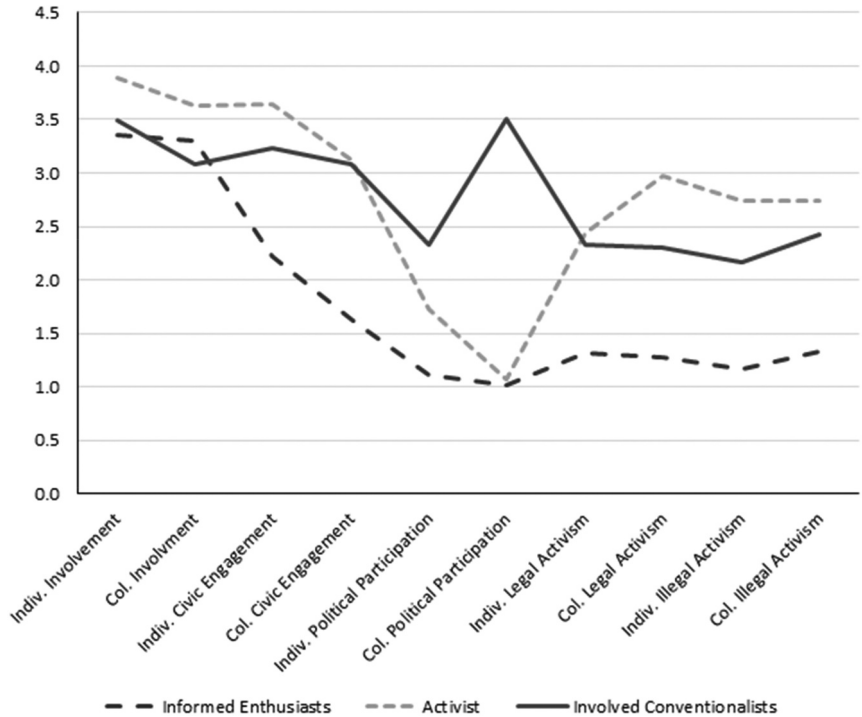

Figure 1. Levels of Political Participation Indicators per Profile.

efficacious than *informed enthusiasts* ($M = 3.57$, $SE = 0.03$; $b = -1.79$, $p < .001$) and *involved conventionalists* ($M = 3.37$, $SE = 0.25$; $b = -1.79$, $p = .001$).

Profile predictors

Multivariate regression was conducted including political efficacy and all predictor items. Citizenship and school track showed issues in parameter estimation and were excluded from the multivariate regression. Specifically, standard errors for the predictors could not be computed. This might be the result of insufficient variance within categories or sparse data structure – that is, situations where certain groups or category combinations are very small or missing, leaving the model with too little information to produce stable estimates (Kutner et al., 2005). Indeed, sample sizes were uneven (standard high school: $n = 574$, vocational high school: $n = 15$; Greek citizenship: $n = 510$, dual citizenship: $n = 47$, non-Greek citizenship: $n = 28$, missing = 4), potentially reducing the statistical power of the model. The results of the multivariate regression can be found in Table 1. Results from univariate regressions and sensitivity analysis can be found in the supplemental material (Table S7 & S8).

Table 1. Predictors of profile membership.

	Informed Enthusiast vs. Involved Conventionalist		Informed Enthusiasts vs. Activist		Involved Conventionalists vs. Activist	
Variable	Coeff.	*SE*	Coeff.	*SE*	Coeff.	SE
Political efficacy	0.43	0.64	**−1.67****	**0.51**	**−2.10****	**0.80**
National identity commitment	**0.93***	**0.48**	0.22	0.28	−0.71	0.60
National identity exploration	0.64	0.37	**−0.73***	**0.33**	**−1.37****	**0.51**
National identity reconsideration	**1.73***	**0.76**	−0.13	0.17	**−1.86***	**0.81**
Perceived ethnic discrimination	**−1.87****	**0.68**	**−0.61***	**0.24**	1.26	0.71
Mother's education[1]	**3.53****	**1.13**	−0.03	0.60	**−3.57****	**1.30**
Father's education[1]	**−6.47*****	**1.46**	**−0.99***	**0.46**	**5.48****	**1.61**
Political alienation	**1.43****	**0.42**	0.15	0.24	**−1.29***	**0.51**
Gender	**−2.90****	**0.95**	0.53	0.49	**3.43****	**1.10**
Age	−1.22	0.61	**−1.44***	**0.58**	−0.23	0.77
Income	**2.52*****	**0.61**	0.58	0.35	**−1.94***	**0.69**
Immigrant background	**−2.06***	**0.90**	0.00	0.54	**2.06***	**0.99**

Note. *Nn*= 474.
df = 42, *BIC* = −5007.49.
[a]Parental education level has been dichotomized in university degree yes or no to account for too small groups.
Significant coefficients appear in bold.
*$p < .05$.**$p < .01$.***$p < .001$.

Profile membership for *informed enthusiasts* and *activists* differed regarding national identity exploration ($M_{\text{informed}} = 3.40$, $SE = 0.05$; $M_{\text{activist}} = 4.20$, $SE = 0.13$), perceived ethnic discrimination ($M_{\text{informed}} = 1.76$, $SE = 0.04$; $M_{\text{activist}} = 2.12$, $SE = 0.17$), father's education (i.e., higher for *activists*), and age ($M_{\text{informed}} = 15.08$, $SE = 0.02$; $M_{\text{activist}} = 15.31$, $SE = 0.17$).

Since only a few participants were classified as *involved conventionalists*, the following comparisons should be interpreted cautiously. Profile membership for *informed enthusiasts* and *involved conventionalists* differed regarding national identity commitment ($M_{\text{conventionalist}} = 3.12$, $SE = 0.43$; $M_{\text{informed}} = 4.14$, $SE = 0.04$), reconsideration ($M_{\text{conventionalist}} = 2.01$, $SE = 0.25$; $M_{\text{informed}} = 2.26$, $SE = 0.04$), perceived ethnic discrimination ($M_{\text{conventionalist}} = 2.41$, $SE = 0.22$; $M_{\text{informed}} = 1.76$, $SE = 0.04$), mother's education (*i.e.*, higher for *informed enthusiasts*), father's education (i.e., higher for *involved conventionalists*), political alienation ($M_{\text{conventionalist}} = 3.10$, $SE = 0.18$; $M_{\text{informed}} = 3.38$, $SE = 0.04$), gender (i.e., females were more likely *informed enthusiasts*), income ($M_{\text{conventionalist}} = 2.69$, $SE = 0.23$; $M_{\text{informed}} = 3.25$, $SE = 0.03$), and immigrant background (i.e., *involved conventionalists* were more likely to have an immigrant background).

Profile membership for *involved conventionalists* and *activists* differed regarding national identity exploration ($M_{\text{conventionalist}} = 2.66$, $SE = 0.43$; $M_{\text{activist}} = 4.20$, $SE = 0.13$), reconsideration ($M_{\text{conventionalist}} = 2.01$, $SE = 0.15$; $M_{\text{activist}} = 2.35$, $SE = 0.16$), mother's education (i.e., higher for *activists*), father's education (i.e., higher for *involved conventionalists*), political alienation ($M_{\text{conventionalist}} = 3.10$, $SE = 0.18$; $M_{\text{activist}} = 3.34$, $SE = 0.17$), gender (i.e., females

Table 2. Latent profile analysis results: probability to stay in the same profile or transition to another.

	Wave 2		
Wave 1	Informed Enthusiast	Involved Conventionalist	Activist
Informed Enthusiast	0.94	0.06	0.01
Involved Conventionalist	0.34	0.50	0.17
Activist	0.12	0.07	0.81

Note. $n = 589$.

were more likely *activists*), income ($M_{conventionalist} = 2.69$, $SE = 0.23$; $M_{activist} = 3.12$, $SE = 0.11$), and immigrant background (i.e., *involved conventionalists* were more likely to have an immigrant background).

Exploratory analysis

For the second wave, the three-profile solution offered statistically and theoretically meaningful profiles, similar to the first wave: *informed enthusiasts* (91.4%, $n = 504$), *activists* (6.3%, $n = 35$), and *involved conventionalists* (2.1%, $n = 12$, see Table S4). Metric or scalar measurement invariance could not be established, likely due to the small *activist* ($n = 35$) and *involved conventionalist* profiles ($n = 12$). We ran an LTA with unconstrained means and variances (see Table 2, limitations are discussed below).

Informed enthusiasts were most likely to remain in their profile across one year (0.94). Similarly, *activists* showed high stability (0.81) but were also likely to transition to *informed enthusiasts* (0.12). *Involved conventionalists* showed an inclination to transition to *informed enthusiasts* (0.34) or *activists* (0.17), though half remained in their profile. Overall, our LTA indicated stable political participation behaviour.

Discussion

We aimed to identify distinct profiles of adolescent political participation and provide a robust test of Ekman and Amnå's (2012) typology. Our LPA revealed profiles with varying levels of latent and manifest forms of political participation, which were relatively stable over one year. Consistent with our hypotheses, political efficacy, political alienation, perceived ethnic discrimination, national identity commitment, exploration, reconsideration, and demographic variables were associated with profile membership.

We found three profiles of adolescent political participation differing in the level of participation, as expected in H1. *Informed enthusiasts* (90.3% of participants) displayed high individual and collective involvement, but lowest levels of other political participation compared to the other profiles. *Activists* (7.4%) showed the highest levels of involvement, civic engagement, and

activism, but low formal political participation, individually and collectively. Finally, a small proportion of adolescents (2.2%) were *involved conventionalists*, displaying the highest individual and collective formal participation and high individual involvement. Individual involvement (i.e., political interest) may be more prevalent across all profiles because it requires fewer resources, is more accessible, and can be done independently without organizational or institutional barriers (O'Toole, 2003).

The *informed enthusiast* profile closely mirrors the standby citizen profile characterized by high latent participation (Amnå & Ekman, 2014; Tzankova et al., 2021). Latent political participation holds potential relevance and may transform into manifest political participation, particularly when the need for such action arises. This profile underscores that a large portion of today's youth demonstrate a strong interest and desire to contribute to issues meaningful to them, despite not acting on this yet (Fuligni, 2019; Sloam, 2016). This line of reasoning is supported by the finding that age significantly predicts profile membership, with older adolescents more likely to be *activists*, and younger ones more likely to be *informed enthusiasts*, possibly due to gaining more resources to act as they age (Quintelier, 2007).

Contrary to previous research (Amnå & Ekman, 2014), our analysis did not reveal any passive profiles characterized by low latent and manifest participation. Instead, we found two profiles defined by distinct manifest political participation forms: activism and formal participation. This finding aligns with studies indicating that Greece is a culturally 'loose' country (i.e., loose norms and high tolerance for diverse forms of political behaviour; Uz, 2014). Additionally, as Greece exhibits relatively high distrust in formal political institutions compared to other EU countries (European Commission, 2021), youth may be more inclined towards activism than formal participation. The absence of a truly passive profile among Greek youth may be attributed to their socialization in a political environment with a partisan culture and compulsory voting, and the historical challenges at that time: Greece in the late 2010s was characterized by gradual recovery after prolonged austerity, heightened political salience due to the North Macedonia name dispute, and the lowering of the voting age to 17. These dynamics may have increased awareness and opportunities for engagement among adolescents.

Political efficacy predicted profile membership, with more efficacious adolescents more likely to be *activists*, and less efficacious adolescents more likely to be *informed enthusiasts* and *involved conventionalists*, as expected in H2. This finding aligns with critical consciousness literature demonstrating a positive association between political efficacy and activism (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Hope et al., 2018), but contrasts with studies establishing a positive association between political efficacy and formal participation (Jeroense & Spierings, 2022). This discrepancy may be due to the adult sample of the latter study. Adolescents may be more disconnected from formal

participation given the inaccessibility of political institutions, which also explains the small percentage of *involved conventionalists* and adolescents' preference for activism (*activists*) or latent participation (*informed enthusiasts*).

Political alienation was related to profile membership, in line with H3. *Informed enthusiasts* and *activists* felt more politically alienated than *involved conventionalists*. *Informed enthusiasts*, despite being interested in politics, may be discouraged from engaging in formal participation due to low external political efficacy, as they believe that political institutions are unresponsive to their actions. For *activists*, this finding aligns with research demonstrating the relation between political alienation and activism (Dahl et al., 2018; Pavlopoulos et al., 2019). Future studies could examine the unique roles of external and internal political efficacy in shaping the relationship between political alienation and forms of political participation. Additionally, research should clarify whether politically alienated adolescents with high efficacy are more likely to engage in activism, while those with low efficacy tend to disengage.

Activists and *involved conventionalists* perceived more ethnic discrimination than *informed enthusiasts*, as expected in H4. This finding contributes to critical consciousness research demonstrating a positive association between perceived discrimination and manifest participation (Hope & Jagers, 2014). Potentially, adolescents become more aware of power disparities when encountering systemic discrimination, which prepares them to redress these challenges through political participation (Hope & Jagers, 2014).

National identity commitment, exploration, and reconsideration were associated with profile membership, partially in contrast to H5. Unexpectedly, *informed enthusiasts* reported higher levels of commitment than *involved conventionalists* – contrasting prior findings (Fowler & Kam, 2007) – while neither group differed significantly from *activists*. *Activists* exhibited higher levels of exploration than both other groups, whereas *involved conventionalists* showed the lowest levels of reconsideration. Considering these processes jointly, we could argue that *informed enthusiasts* might have been in identity *foreclosure* (i.e., strong commitments without much exploration, Marcia, 1966). Its passive acceptance of national identity may lack depth but can lead to political engagement (Gentry, 2018). Future studies could examine national identity profiles and relate it to political behaviour to disentangle associations between identity and political development.

Demographic differences were also observed across profiles. Mother's education was higher for *activists* and *informed enthusiasts* than for *involved conventionalists*, while father's education was highest for *involved conventionalists*, followed by *activists* and *informed enthusiasts*, respectively. This finding reflects research linking parental education to adolescent political participation (Wray-Lake et al., 2020), and parallels studies suggesting that maternal

and paternal education may have differential effects (Bougher, 2018). Males were more likely to be *involved conventionalists* than *activists* or *informed enthusiasts*, supporting research demonstrating that male youth favour formal political participation, whereas female youth engage more in civic and community activities (Grasso & Smith, 2022).

Income was lowest among *involved conventionalists* compared to both other profiles. Youth from low-income backgrounds might lack avenues to other forms of political participation due to limited resources and opportunities in their communities. As civic development depends upon civic knowledge and opportunities to act, the absence of these limit adolescents' potential for engagement (Atkins & Hart, 2010), except for mandatory political activities (i.e., compulsory voting in Greece). Lastly, adolescents with an immigrant background were more likely to be *involved conventionalists* than *informed enthusiasts* and *activists*. This finding aligns with previous studies showing that immigrant youth are more politically active than majority youth (Eckstein et al., 2015). Almost all the adolescents in our sample, including those with an immigrant background, held Greek citizenship, which might explain the prevalence of formal participation. Again, results based on comparisons with *involved conventionalists* should be interpreted with care and should be replicated.

Finally, our exploratory analysis suggests that adolescent political participation is relatively stable over one year. Most *informed enthusiasts* (93.7%) and *activists* (81.2%) remained in their profiles, while fewer adolescents transitioned to profiles of latent political participation. While this could indicate a general tendency of moving from manifest to latent political participation classes, the transitions from *activist* and *involved conventionalists* to *informed enthusiasts* could partially be affected by the significant attrition of participants with higher values of individual civic engagement. Nevertheless, we still find mostly stability, aligning with research on civic engagement profile transitions over a five-year period, which highlight stability for most adolescents and incremental change for a few (Wray-Lake et al., 2014). This stability may be explained by person-oriented approaches capturing enduring individual differences in how youth engage with society (Wray-Lake et al., 2014). To exclude other explanations for the found stability (i.e., one-year observation period), future studies could replicate our findings by including more measurement points (te Brinke et al., 2023) or longer observation periods.

Strengths, limitations and future research

A key strength of our study is the utilization of diverse predictors and indicators of political participation, including individual, collective, latent, and manifest forms. Additionally, including experiences of discrimination highlights broader societal factors related to political participation. Nevertheless, our study has some limitations that warrant caution when interpreting the results.

First, our political participation measures were rather adult-focused, which may have limited item variance and, thus, contributed to uneven group sizes across the profiles. This adult-focus might also have affected the reliability of the subscales, and in turn could have compromised the interpretability of mean scores by reflecting non-shared variance or measurement error (e.g., due to varying degrees of appeal or feasibility of activities for adolescents). The limited number of items per scale, intended to reduce dropout participant burden, likely further contributed to this issue. Nevertheless, low internal consistency is not uncommon for behavioural measures such as political participation, which constitutes a heterogeneous construct encompassing diverse and sometimes loosely related actions rather than a single latent trait (see, e.g. Bollen & Lennox, 1991). Thus, lower reliabilities do not necessarily indicate poor measurement quality but may instead reflect the multifaceted nature of the construct. Although items were selected for their theoretical fit to the underlying typology and models converged with stable parameter estimations, future studies should aim to include adolescent-specific forms (e.g. protests, online action, organizational involvement; Kitanova, 2019) and topics (e.g. climate and social justice; Bárta et al., 2021) to comprehensively capture the diversity of adolescents' political behaviour.

Second, the uneven group sizes suggest restricted replicability of smaller groups and their regression analysis results (i.e., limited power to detect significant associations due to wide confidence intervals). However, several factors support the robustness of our findings. Our results align with previous studies (e.g. Tzankova et al., 2021), which show that most adolescents are not actively engaged in political activities. Additionally, the groups were theoretically meaningful, demonstrated good statistical model fit (e.g. posterior probabilities above .9), and political efficacy varied significantly across groups – unlike in fewer-profile solutions. Moreover, while a profile size of 5% or 50 cases is commonly used as a rule of thumb, literature emphasizes the importance of the theoretical meaningfulness of profiles (Weller et al., 2020), and studies have included smaller profile sizes (e.g., 1.3%; O'Donnel et al., 2017). Future research could increase sample size to test the robustness of these results, and, given our study's attrition and issues in parameter estimation with school track and citizenship, oversampling vocational schools or adolescents with dual or non-Greek citizenship may be beneficial.

Third, our study excluded some non-participation measures outlined by Ekman and Amnå (2012). While we captured political passivity, future studies could include anti-political orientations (e.g. actively avoiding politics). Finally, our LTA results should be interpreted cautiously. The inability to establish metric or scalar invariance suggests our profiles may not be content-equivalent, even though they were comparable at a configural level. The lack of invariance may reflect the evolving nature of adolescent political participation with ongoing

changes in participation opportunities, making higher levels of invariance challenging to achieve.

Implications and conclusion

As youth political participation is complex and multifaceted, there is a need for policymakers, educational and research institutions, and community members to broaden their perspective of youth participation beyond formal political participation. The reconceptualization of youth political behaviour, particularly the incorporation of a wider range of political actions, is crucial in designing effective policies and civic educational programmes. Furthermore, the role of political efficacy in promoting a broader spectrum of action suggests that fostering efficacy might be a viable way to support youth political participation. Accordingly, creating opportunity structures for action, such as spaces for dialogue or information platforms on how to get involved, may help transform interest into manifest action when necessary.

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Data availability statement

Data and syntax to reproduce the results are available online: https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/S967U

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